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I cannot believe that the project to bring the Mexican opera troupe, which has made a success in San Francisco, on to New York will amount to anything. The star of the Mexican troupe is the tenor Giannini, who was heard here with Kellogg and found to be too loud—which is not a fault in California.

"The Beggar Student" has been revived at the Casino, Rudolph Aronson having triumphed over Colonel McCaull by the votes of the stockholders; but, without W. T. Carleton and Frederick Leslie in the cast, it can scarcely hope for its former success.

American opera, ignored by metropolitan managers, has taken refuge with the Musical Union of Watertown, N. Y. At Watertown "The Culpit Fay," based upon Drake's poem, the libretto by Judge Gedney and the music by Mr. Alden, of Boston, is to be produced, and the undertaking is in every way creditable to all concerned.

F. C. Burnand, the dramatist, humorist, and editor of *Punch*, writes me that he is thinking of coming over here to deliver a new "Happy Thought" lecture. The characteristic of most English readers is that they do not know how to read so that the audience can hear them; but Burnand is a capital actor, as much at home before the footlights as at his desk. His American tour is a very happy thought.

STEPHEN FISKE.

BOSTON ARCHITECTURE.

"BEAUTIFUL Boston" has a pleasing alliterative effectiveness, but it is a phrase not heard often except in the mouths of those whose normal state it is to sit and choir endlessly the praise of Boston—namely, the Bostonians themselves. Wherever two or three Bostonians are gathered together, whether on the lordly terrace of Beacon Hill or in exile in such fastnesses as Chicago and New York, or even amid æsthetic delights in Switzerland or Italy, one hears talk of the beautiful new Boston that is rising from the rich ooze of wealth that transcontinental railroads and Michigan mines have deposited around the little old peninsula whereon the British were cooped up for ten months after Bunker Hill and then quitted, driven out by Washington, after a possessorship of a century and a half, never to set foot upon it again. It is on this solid historical base, this sufficient proof of our sterner virtues, that we now recline somewhat at ease and adorn our classic capital. We feel that we have earned the right—we have done the state some service—and we have made some money.

I have said that as yet Boston is called beautiful mainly by the Bostonian, but there has been one conspicuous exception of late. Henry James, the Londoner (or is he Parisian? at any rate, not Bostonian), born in Albany and early transplanted to New York City (where, as he himself tells us, he felt no slightest local attachment, but sighed as a boy for the London of London Punch), missed the Bostonizing which the brothers and sisters of his gifted family have enjoyed, and which would have given him a peace (like that in Mother Church) he can now never know; but he is able, on this account, to show us, with a very intimate, if not sympathetic, insight, to ourselves as others see us. In his unique sketch in two recent numbers of the Century, "A New England Winter," he has given the "impression" of Boston of a young denationalized Impressionist like himself, kindly returning from Paris for a few months to lend himself to his mother and his native city as a special boon. "Florimond painted a few things while he was in America," says the story, "though he had told his mother he had come to rest; but when, several months later, in Paris, he showed his 'notes,' as he called them, to a friend, the young Frenchman asked him if Massachusetts were really so much like Andalusia. There was certainly nothing Andalusian in the prospect as Florimond traversed the artificial bosom of the Back Bay. He had made his way promptly into Beacon Street, and he greatly admired that vista. The long, straight avenue lay airing its newness in the frosty day, and all its individual façades, with their neat, sharp ornaments, seemed to have been scoured, with a kind of friction, by the hard, salutary light. Their brilliant browns and drabs, their rosy surfaces of brick, made a variety of fresh, violent tones, such as Florimond liked to memorize, and the large, clear windows of their curved fronts faced each other, across the street, like candid, inevitable eyes. . . . The upper part of

Beacon Street seemed to Florimond charming—the long, wide, sunny slope, the uneven line of the older houses, the contrasted, differing, bulging fronts, the painted bricks, the tidy facings, the immaculate doors, the burnished silver plates, the denuded twigs of the far extent of the Common on the other side; and to crown the eminence and complete the picture, high in the air, poised in the right place, over everything that clustered below, the most felicitous object in Boston—the gilded dome of the State House." Mr. James also paints the narrow and crowded shopping streets, so densely thronged with women that it seems as if there were a war and all the men had gone to it, and the suburb of Cambridge; but he entirely ignores the great double Commonwealth Avenue, with its miles of park between two roadways stretching across the "artificial bosom of the Back Bay," and eventually to reach Harvard over an ornamental viaduct across the Charles River. It is around this quarter that the hopes and expectations of "Beautiful Boston" cluster. But we cannot be too grateful that Mr. James allows his dainty Parisian Impressionist to admire the foundation that has come down to us in the old Common and the domed State House, dating from the last century, the work of Thomas Bulfinch, the author of the "Age of Fable" and architect of most of the old Beacon Hill mansions, which are even now really handsomer and more imposing than any of the new ones on the Back Bay. We may at least feel, now, that things are begun right.

For all the schemes for "Beautiful Boston," take the Common and adjoining Public Garden, with the gilded dome "high in air, poised in the right place" above them, as the starting place. The first stretch of the new Boston toward the west is indeed already an accomplished fact. What was only thirty years ago an expanse some two miles square of shallow tide-water, with but a railroad or two and a mill-dam shooting across it like the first rays of crystallization, is now the best part of the city, with real estate valued two years ago at more than \$50,000,000. The State has done the filling, and made over \$3,000,000 by the operation, besides adding all the beautiful avenues and squares to the public possessions. The original plan for this great improvement was the work of the late Arthur Gilman, the famous wit and "bon vivant," as well as architect. The planning of the works at present going on has been in the hands of Frederick Law Olmstead. Westward the line of beautifying improvement still takes its way. With the ground solid, now, all the way to Brookline, that "swell" suburb must next become the West End of Boston. Through this old town of Brookline, the historic banks of Muddy River, scene of many a skirmish with the Indians in early chronicles, are next to be converted into a drive. As the waters of the river are brought into the Back Bay improvement under a noble elevated terrace of brown stone, with a half a dozen splendid bridges crossing it, where the city avenues intersect it, from which will appear, according to Mr. Olmstead's design, the scenery of a winding creek with wide natural meadows, the drive-way will be continuous through elegant surroundings from the heart of the city to the shores of Jamaica Pond, which are public ground, and thence to the great country park, as yet in its natural state, in West Roxbury.

Another thirty years will undoubtedly see this noble plan accomplished, too, like the filling and building over of the Back Bay. Meanwhile there is under way the embankment of the Charles River along the finished district and its vis-à-vis across the river on the Cambridge side, which is undertaken by a corporation of wealthy capitalists as a private speculation. But these embankments will be but the trimmings and borders of an already very rich and beautiful range of streets. Built from the foundations of piling, within a quarter of a century or so, and most of it within five or ten years, the district is all new together and homogeneous, yet far from monotonous. A different principle has prevailed here from that in vogue when the residence quarters of New York were building during the same period. Here the long block of houses all alike is the exception. Each house is commonly complete in itself and of a character of its own, according to the taste and means of its builder. It has fortunately happened that simultaneously with this building of the new dwelling district has risen the new school of architects—not altogether because of the demand, for it is conceivable that but for the re-

vival of early forms and ideas of building there might have been set down here, row on row, a succession of streets as monotonous as London's or yours from Fourteenth to Fifty-fourth streets. Some influence, whether that of the Centennial Exhibition or of the English revival of art, has given us a new birth in taste. Naturally and fortunately the first expression of this new sense has been in the improvement of our houses and their decoration. Nowhere is this new start seen to better effect than in the homes lining the Back Bay avenues and cross streets; and with all the variety and originality of form and decoration there is, after all, almost nothing of vulgar sensationalism or grotesque and screaming oddity for the mere sake of oddity. It is remarkable how well we have escaped that misfortune, with all the old safe and standard conventionality out of fashion. Richardson, with his daring new departures, has had full swing here, and piled up some of his most massive and important works, both in private houses and public structures. But the score of young native architects who have been inspired by him into invention and adventure have kept their heads very well. One of the good and abiding results of the architectural revival in Boston is the Rotch prize for young architects, which permits the winner to go to Europe to travel and study, and links the family name of one of our most successful young architects with this monument of progress in the history of American arts. But the great memorial of the epoch is this new Boston itself, with its sumptuous and sound new house-building. The most surprised and delighted of those who see what has been done with old Boston are those returning to us or visiting us, to whom old Boston is near and dear. Julian Hawthorne, lately trying to identify the scenes of his father's romances, imagines Hester Prynne musing in her lonely cot beside the gray waters of the landlocked bay and amazed at a vision of Commonwealth Avenue rising from the waves. "Where," he exclaims, "in the harsh soil of Puritan asceticism, were the seeds hidden of all this present luxury and culture?"

As I write the town is dreadfully wrought up over the apparent carrying into execution of the long-pending threat to build an apartment house in Copley Square, the first-accomplished triumph of "Beautiful Boston." This is the noble square on which front the Museum of Fine Arts, Trinity Church, and the new Public Library, and from which are visible, near by, the two great buildings of the Institute of Technology and the Museum of Natural History, and the "New Old South," the Art Club, and other fine public buildings. It is a narrow flat-iron of land directly in front of Trinity and extending half the length of the Art Museum that is to be built over, to the just horror and indignation of all good Bostonians. It appears that the owner offered some years ago to sell it to Trinity Church for \$20,000. But it was believed by that corporation's lawyers that it was already public property, having been so laid out on a map of the land company which owned the Back Bay. That claim, however, has been thrown out by the courts, and the owner has now trebled his price, demanding \$60,000. Meanwhile, he has actually begun digging for the foundations and cellar of his projected building for bachelor apartments, and the anguish of all interested in the artistic and architectural glory of Boston can only be imagined. Agonized appeals are written to the journals calling for subscriptions toward buying off the hardened landowner. Ruskin would delight in the intensity of the popular indignation manifested in these communications, very much in his own vein of fervid protest against modern vulgarity and money-getting greed. A last stand has just been taken on a legal technicality which may interpose another delay of a few months, but it seems like a forlorn hope. The trouble with the plan of a subscription is that it is only a short time since another part of the same square was bought in that way, with the aid of an appropriation from the city treasury, and public spirit and liberality are about exhausted by that effort. It is certainly too bad that this new draft should have to be made in a year when nobody can feel much like giving. One writer proposes that every patron of the symphony concerts and opera this winter should put aside a proportionate sum for Copley Square, and perhaps something of this kind will be attempted.

GRETA,

BOSTON, October 4th, 1884.